



Water Quality NewsFlash

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SF Bay Mercury TMDL – Regional Board makes second attempt – In

September 2004, the San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board adopted a total maximum daily load (TMDL) for mercury in the Bay. A year later, the State Water Resources Control Board rejected the TMDL and remanded it back to the Regional Board to make specific revisions (see *NewsFlash 05-37*). The Regional Board has now addressed the State Board concerns and is again proposing the TMDL for adoption. The revision:

- Decreases the total allowed annual loading of mercury from 706 kg to 700 kg. Current (2003) loading is about 1220 kg/yr. The largest sources of mercury in San Francisco Bay are bed erosion (i.e., resuspended Bay muds and the Central Valley watershed which contribute about 460 kg/yr and 440 kg/yr respectively). Both of these sources are the legacy of past gold and mercury mining.
- Assigns more stringent individual and aggregate mass limits for sewage treatment facilities (publicly owned treatment works – POTWs). Compared with the original TMDL, allocation 17 kg/yr, this version decreases the aggregate allocation of mercury loadings assigned to the POTWs to 14 (interim) then 11 kg/yr (final). In addition, POTWs must implement aggressive pollution prevention measures and monitor for methyl mercury. The Board will issue a watershed NPDES permit to the POTWs for mercury.
- Eliminates the Basin Plan's existing total mercury water quality objective (0.025 ug/l – 4-day) but adopts new fish tissue objectives for mercury in large fish to protect human health (0.2 mg/kg) and in small fish to protect wildlife (0.03 mg/kg). (See *NewsFlash 06-04*.)
- Includes a provision that NPDES permits for POTWs and industry will include a re-opener to allow for future incorporation of a pollutant offset (trading) policy to be developed by the State Board.
- Adds a requirement for storm water dischargers to monitor for methylmercury to determine whether it is a general environmental concern and also to identify any local effects at discharge locations. As in the original draft TMDL, this revision includes reductions approaching 50% for the mercury carried in stormwater runoff – a very difficult challenge. Urban runoff would be allocated a mercury loading of 82 kg/yr, down from an estimated current loading of 160 kg/yr. This loading estimate is based on very little data. The 2004 TMDL Report stated: “The specific means by which urban storm water runoff management agencies will achieve their proposed wasteload allocations are unknown.”

The Board will hold two public hearings on the proposed amendments: June 14 and August 9. Comments are due June 5 and are limited to the issues identified in the remand and the revisions being proposed. Posted: <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sanfranciscobay/sfbaymercurytmdl.htm>

WQ NewsFlash is a weekly update of storm water and related news for the Department. *Verify information before taking action on these bulletins.* Contact Betty Sanchez, Betty_Sanchez@dot.ca.gov (916) 653-2115, or Fred Krieger, (510) 843-7889, fkrieger@msn.com with questions or to be added or deleted from e-mail list. Posted online at: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/env/stormwater/publicat/newsflash/index.htm>